

Daily Economic News Summary: 11 December 2017

1. India to seek permanent solution to food stock issue at WTO

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu has said that a permanent solution to the public stockholding of food stock is a "must have" at the 11th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which began in Buenos Aires on 10.12.2017. The permanent solution, the minister said, should also cover the current as well as future programmes of all developing member countries and LDCs as it concerns the livelihood of millions of poor people. "A permanent solution to public stockholding for food security is a must have at WTO MC (Ministerial Conference) 11 ... Any permanent solution on public stockholding for food security should cover the current and future programmes of all developing member countries and LDCs," the minister said in a series of tweets after attending a meeting of G33 grouping.

2 India fights hard to retain special benefits received as developing country member

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

Even as India tries to keep alive multilateralism in global trade practices, it is fighting hard to retain the special provisions it enjoys as a developing country member of the World Trade Organization. If the US and the EU were the ones that have until now hinted at the need to curtail the special and differential (S&D) facility for developing countries, now even the least developed countries (LDCs) are challenging this flexibility. A group of more than 70 LDCs and developing countries have proposed separate S&D guidelines for the two kinds of nations. The G-90 proposal asks for stricter notification requirements for developing countries compared with LDCs or those

developing countries that face capacity constraints. The issue of separate disciplines for India came up for discussion at an informal meeting of negotiators on Saturday, a day before a four-day ministerial conference of the WTO started here. "LDCs are not sure if they want us to be part of the S&D provisions," said an Indian official aware of the development.

3. Prabhu reaches out to China & South Africa to put up united front

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

As 164 countries prepare for the launch of the eleventh ministerial meeting at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Argentina, India has begun forming alliances with other countries on a range of issues to put up a united front. "We've been having very good discussions with quite a few countries... the idea is to be on a common platform so that when we finally push for an agenda, there will be enough support for us," commerce and industry minister Suresh Prabhu told the media on 10.12.2017. Prabhu had a meeting with his South African counterpart Rob Davies on Saturday where the two had a congruence of views on issues of domestic support in agriculture, investment facilitation, ecommerce, domestic regulation in services and micro, small and medium enterprises. "There was a clear understanding of each other's positions similar to Geneva and the ministers agreed to carry forward their interests," said an official in the know. India's effort is to have South Africa and China on board on development issues, sources said.

4. WTO ministerial begins with moderate hope of outcome

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

The 11th ministerial meeting of the 164-member WTO has begun amid only moderate hopes of an outcome as developed and developing nations braced up to push their agendas at the highest policy making body of the World Trade Organization.

India is being represented at the meeting, which began on Sunday, by Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu who will be pushing for a permanent solution to the public food stock-holding issue which is crucial for operating the food security programme. During the course of the four-day deliberations, the developing nations will resist the efforts by the developed nations to formally set aside the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) and place new issues including e-commerce on the negotiating table.

5. ADB okays \$346 mn loan to upgrade Karnataka highways

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

Asian Development Bank (ADB) will fund highway upgradation project in Karnataka for which it has approved a loan of USD 346 million, ADB said today. It said the Board of Directors has approved the loan to improve 419 km of state highways by upgrading them to two and four-lane with paved shoulders and improving culverts and bridges. The project will carry out a road safety survey to identify critical accident spots across the state highways and carry out measures to improve these, it said. This is ADB's second funding to Karnataka, whose per capita income is higher than the national average and has lower unemployment and poverty rates. The project will see construction of planned pedestrian, installation of women-friendly elements including bus shelters, marked crossings, footpaths and proper signage, among others.

6. 24 companies to invest Rs 60,000cr in JNPT SEZ: Nitin Gadkari

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

Union Shipping and Ports Minister Nitin Gadkari today said 24 companies have offered to invest over Rs 60,000 crore in a special economic zone adjoining the country's largest container port

JNPT. "Twenty-four companies have already offered to come (and) set up (ventures) in JNPT SEZ who will use it for exports," Gadkari said, speaking at a seminar organised by Moneycontrol and Free Press Journal here this morning. This will entail an investment of Rs 60,000 crore and create employment for 1.25-1.50 lakh people, he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation for the facility months after being sworn-in in May 2014 and the government was targeting to create 1.50 lakh jobs in the facility.

7. India rejects move to include non-trade issues in WTO

The Economic Times ([Link](#))

India has opposed efforts by developed countries to include issues like human rights, labour standards, gender and environment in global trade negotiations. Calling these subjects non-trade issues, India opposed any rule making on them in the World Trade Organization (WTO). The issues came up at a meeting organised by the Inter Parliamentary union and European Parliament at the ongoing eleventh ministerial conference of WTO here. "These are pressure groups which try to influence negotiations through advocacy," said an Indian trade official. "However, this can't be used for trade rules and stop movement of goods," the official added. Three members of Indian parliament- Kirit Somaiya, Anurag Thakur and Swapan Dasgupta are here for the parliamentary meetings while 200 members of the European Parliament have come.

8. To boost Make in India, framework for SEZs set for a complete makeover

Source: The Economic Times ([Link](#))

India is eyeing a revamp of its framework for special economic zones (SEZs) to boost manufacturing, including the exemption of factories located in them from minimum alternate tax (MAT), seen as a key factor that has stunted the zones. Other ideas include slashing the category

of deemed exports besides reducing minimum area requirement for smaller and special category states. The proposals are likely to be considered during budget talks, but a final call will be taken keeping in view revenue considerations and government's intent to cut corporate exemptions. The revamp has been necessitated by the switchover to the goods and services tax (GST), but the government is keen to go beyond this to spur private investments, particularly in manufacturing. GST was implemented across the country on July 1.

9 Manohar Parrikar launches India's first-ever mobile food testing lab

Source: The Indian Express ([Link](#))

Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar on Sunday launched country's first-ever mobile food testing laboratory. Parrikar on 10.11.2017 unveiled the vehicle, worth Rs 41 lakh, in presence of Goa Food and Drugs Administration Minister Vishwajit Rane. The laboratory mounted on a bus will be travelling across the state checking food samples on the spot. Parrikar said this would be the first ever 'Food Safety on Wheel' vehicle in the entire country. "It is entirely funded by the Centre, which will also bear the maintenance cost for five years," he said. The laboratory, he said, will help in on-the-spot testing of food items and curb adulteration. "Besides this, it will also educate people about nutrition and importance of safe food," the Chief Minister added.